

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK
ALGI CRAWFORD, XAVIER HARRISON, and
KEVEEN GORIS *on behalf of themselves and
others similarly situated,*

Plaintiffs,

-against-

LEEDING BUILDERS GROUP, LLC, and
AECOM,

Defendants.

ANALISA TORRES, District Judge:

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23 Civ. 7290 (AT)

ORDER

On April 15, 2024, Plaintiffs filed a letter stating they “intend[ed] to submit a *Cheeks* motion later th[at] week.” ECF No. 32. Plaintiffs have yet to file their motion for settlement approval. By **May 15, 2024**, Plaintiffs shall file their *Cheeks* motion and FLSA settlement for the Court’s review.

The parties are reminded that an FLSA action shall not be dismissed unless the settlement agreement has been approved by the Court or the Department of Labor (“DOL”). *See Cheeks v. Freeport Pancake House, Inc.*, 796 F.3d 199, 206 (2d Cir. 2015); *Samake v. Thunder Lube, Inc.*, 24 F.4th 804, 810–11 (2d Cir. 2022) (“The concern of *Cheeks* was with the settlement that included as one of its terms the dismissal of the action, and not specifically with whether the dismissal was with prejudice or without.”).

To the extent Plaintiffs seeks the Court’s approval, Plaintiffs—or the parties jointly—must file a letter motion explaining why the proposed settlement is fair and reasonable and should discuss, at a minimum, the following factors:

(1) the plaintiff’s range of possible recovery; (2) the extent to which “the settlement will enable the parties to avoid anticipated burdens and expenses in establishing their respective claims and defenses”; (3) the seriousness of the litigation risks faced by the parties; (4) whether “the settlement agreement is the product of arm’s-length bargaining between experienced counsel”; and (5) the possibility of fraud or collusion.

Wolinsky v. Scholastic Inc., 900 F. Supp. 2d 332, 335 (S.D.N.Y. 2012) (quoting *Medley v. Am. Cancer Soc’y*, No. 10 Civ. 3214, 2010 WL 3000028, at *1 (S.D.N.Y. July 23, 2010)). The letter must also address whether there is a bona fide dispute as to the number of hours worked or the amount of compensation due and how much of the proposed settlement plaintiffs’ attorney shall be seeking as fees. *See Cheeks*, 796 F.3d at 202, 207.

The parties are advised that they should be specific as to the range of possible recovery and the seriousness of the litigation risks faced so that the Court can evaluate the settlement, as

“conclusory statements are insufficient.” *Brito v. Alpine Constr. & Renovation Corp.*, No. 23 Civ. 2748, 2024 WL 323368, at *2 (S.D.N.Y. Jan. 29, 2024). Absent special circumstances, the Court will not approve any settlement agreement that is filed under seal or in redacted form. *See Lopez v. Nights of Cabiria, LLC*, 96 F. Supp. 3d 170, 177 n.44 (S.D.N.Y. 2015).

In addition, absent compelling circumstances, the Court will not approve settlement agreements containing sweeping non-disclosure provisions, *see id.* at 179–80; *Flood v. Carlson Rests. Inc.*, No. 14 Civ. 2740, 2015 WL 4111668, at *2 (S.D.N.Y. July 6, 2015), or broad releases waiving claims having no relation to FLSA issues, *see Flood*, 2015 WL 4111668, at *2. Specifically, absent extraordinary circumstances, the Court shall not approve settlements that (1) “release from liability numerous entities beyond Defendants, including[] their predecessors, successors, assigns, parents, subsidiaries,” and other entities; (2) “bind not only Plaintiffs but also [his] successors, assigns, heirs, . . . and any legal and personal representatives”; and (3) require Plaintiffs to release “any claim regarding unpaid or improperly paid wages,” not only the claims involved in the instant action. *Velez v. S.T.A. Parking Corp.*, No. 23 Civ. 4786, 2024 WL 552781, at *3 (S.D.N.Y. Feb. 12, 2024). Such a “release—read literally—would have the . . . effect of releasing any wage and hour claims that [P]laintiffs[s] ha[ve] against a wide range of unidentified individuals and business[es] only tenuously affiliated with [D]efendants.” *Lara v. Air Sea Land Shipping & Moving, Inc.*, No. 19 Civ. 8486, 2019 WL 6117588, at *2 (S.D.N.Y. Nov. 18, 2019).

Any request for attorneys’ fees must be accompanied by supporting documentation. “In this circuit, a proper fee request ‘entails submitting contemporaneous billing records documenting, for each attorney, the date, the hours expended, and the nature of the work done.’” *Lopez*, 96 F. Supp. 3d at 181 (quoting *Wolinsky*, 900 F. Supp. 2d at 336).

The parties may consent to proceed before the Honorable Jennifer Willis, who would then oversee the approval of the settlement. If the parties consent to Judge Willis’s jurisdiction, by **May 10, 2024**, they shall file a fully executed Notice, Consent, and Reference of a Civil Action to a Magistrate Judge form, available at <https://nysd.uscourts.gov/node/754> on the docket. The parties are free to withhold consent without negative consequences. If the Court approves that form, all further proceedings will then be conducted before Judge Willis rather than before me. An information sheet on proceedings before magistrate judges is also attached to this order. Any appeal would be taken directly to the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, as it would be if the consent form were not signed and so ordered.

SO ORDERED.

Dated: April 26, 2024
New York, New York



ANALISA TORRES
United States District Judge